

about the trials and barred access to international journalists. However, that was only the beginning of Castro's reign of terror.

Accounts of psychological torture, abuse and neglect have slowly begun to emerge from Cuba's prisons. Stories of rat- and bug-infested cells, beatings, solitary confinement and a lack of medical treatment seem to be the standard in Castro's prisons. The accounts are so horrible that they have led a spokesperson for the U.S. State Department to declare that "the Cuban Government seems to be going out of its way to treat these prisoners inhumanely."

The wife of journalist Hector Maseda, sentenced to 20 years, shared his accounts of bed bugs so rampant in one jail that prisoners cannot sleep. Family members of journalist Oscar Espinosa Chepe, who is suffering from liver disease and gastrointestinal bleeding, shared his stories of being denied medical care. His family fears he may die.

The wife of Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva, a blind dissident, recently presented one of his letters to the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva. In the letter he talks of the daily "sawdust shower" that he has been subjected to by a fellow inmate. Gonzalez writes that the substance "gives me the sensation of millions of bugs constantly running all over me." He continues, stating, "I don't know if this is a biological substance or a chemical agent. But I know that it is not insects because when I touch my skin there are no actual bugs that I can feel."

Other prisoners, Mr. Speaker, complain of leaking cells, no sheets, no pillows and no eating utensils.

Amnesty International recently declared the 75 dissidents and opposition leaders "prisoners of conscience." These 75 convictions bring Cuba's total to 90 "prisoners of conscience" currently in Cuban prisons. This makes Cuba the country with the highest number of prisoners with that status in the Western Hemisphere. Various other organizations inside and outside Cuba place the number of political prisoners at more than 300.

However, these are the stories and prisoner accounts that have managed to be leaked to the public. There is no telling what evils lurk in Castro's jails and what stories and horrors have yet to see the light of day.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join with me and condemn Castro's incarceration and mistreatment of the 75 dissidents and all of its political prisoners. Congress must send a strong message to Castro that the abuse of Cuban political prisoners has not gone unnoticed and will not be allowed to continue.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PENCE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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TIME FOR AN END TO THE ADMINISTRATION'S SECRECY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the special congressional panel looking into the September 11 attacks issued its report. It said the intelligence community could have done a much better job in protecting the American people. That truly is an understatement.

But what stands out is the fact that the Bush administration has taken secrecy to a new unacceptable level. The administration insists on keeping secret 28 pages of that report. It is widely believed that these 28 pages deal with the possible involvement of foreign governments in the 9/11 tragedy and specifically Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Speaker, the Bush administration clearly exaggerated the immediate threat to the United States posed by the regime of Saddam Hussein in order to justify the war in Iraq, and, indeed, I have supported the calls for an independent commission to get to the bottom of that deception.

The administration's credibility has been greatly damaged by the revelations about the manipulated statements in the President's State of the Union address. Now we have 28 pages of a report of a vitally important study that are being kept away from the American people.

Do the American people not deserve to know the truth, whole truth, the whole story about 9/11? Do the families of 9/11 not deserve to know? What is the Bush administration now hiding about Saudi Arabia's possible involvement? How can the Bush administration justify keeping this secret from the American people?

In an editorial entitled "Deception and Denial," the London-based Financial Times this morning says the following about the Bush administration:

"The scale of the Bush administration's official obstruction is clear." And the article goes on to say "The Bush administration has done everything they can do to make sure that's not the focus," said William Wechsler, a former White House official who coauthored a recent report critical of the Saudi failure to cut off financing for terrorist troops." The Bush administration wants "'to talk about tactical breakdown, but they do not want to talk about the elephant in the room,'" i.e., specifically Saudi Arabia. According to the Financial Times, "the tantalizing glimpses of the Saudi role that survived the censor's pencil are by far the report's most potentially explosive aspects."

We know there were meetings between some of the hijackers and Omar al-Bayoumi, a Saudi citizen. What does that mean in the context of 9/11? There are reports that al-Bayoumi supplied at least some of the hijackers with cash. Is that true? Unless the Bush administration drops its insistence on secrecy, the American people and families of the victims of 9/11 might never know the truth.

The Bush administration says it cannot tell the American people the whole truth because of national security concerns. One should ask, is it national security that the Bush administration cares about or is it political security? Or could it be access to Saudi oil? As the Financial Times said this morning, "It is hard to avoid suspicion that some of the coyness may have political origins." The decision to keep this information secret adds "a new layer of haze over its credibility," says the Financial Times.

It is time for the Bush administration to tell the families and to tell the American people what it knows about the possible involvement of foreign governments or foreign nationals in the events of September 11, and no one should be exempt from that scrutiny. No country, no person. It is time for an end to the Bush administration's secrecy.

[From the Financial Times, July 25, 2003]

REPORT RAISES NEW QUESTIONS ON SAUDI ROLE IN 9/11 ATTACKS

(By Marianne Brun-Rovet and Edward Alden)

WASHINGTON.—The September 11 hijackers received foreign-government support while they were in the US plotting the attacks on New York and Washington, the leader of a congressional inquiry charged.

The conclusion, which is strongly hinted at in the declassified parts of the inquiry's 900-page report released yesterday, will raise new questions about the role of Saudi Arabia in particular. The Bush administration insisted on deleting a 28-page section of the report that focused on the link to foreign governments.

Senator Bob Graham, the former Democratic intelligence committee chairman who led the investigation, said the hijackers "received, during most of this time [in the US], significant assistance from a foreign government which further facilitated their ability to be so lethal". He would not identify the government.

But he charged the Bush administration with refusing to release the information "to protect the country or countries . . . that were providing direct assistance to some of the hijackers".

The report also contains new evidence that US intelligence agencies and the Federal Bureau of Investigation knew far more about some of the hijackers activities than has been revealed.

While the administration has insisted that the plot could not have been unraveled from the information available, a congressional official said: "There was no smoking gun in the sense of all the details and the specifics in one piece of intelligence . . . But that is not the same as saying that this attack could not have been prevented."

Despite the deletions demanded by the administration, which held up the report's release for nearly seven months, it contains new evidence that indicates the Saudis may

have had ties to supporters of the September 11 hijackers.

It focuses on the activities of Omar al-Bayoumi, who some in the FBI believed to be a Saudi intelligence agent, though the Saudi government has denied the allegation.

Mr. Bayoumi played a vital role in establishing Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar, two of the hijackers, when they arrived in the U.S. before the attacks. U.S. intelligence agencies knew as early as 1999 that the two were linked with al-Qaeda and that they had attended a CIA-monitored high-level meeting of the terror network's operatives in Malaysia in January 2000.

Mr. Bayoumi met the pair in Los Angeles shortly after he was observed entering and leaving a meeting at the Saudi consulate.

Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to the U.S., said yesterday that the country was facing "false accusations . . . made by some for political purposes" despite its widespread co-operation with the U.S. in the war on terrorism. "It is disappointing that despite everything we are doing, outrageous charges continue."

The report also revealed another serious U.S. intelligence failure before the attacks, which represented "perhaps the intelligence community's best chance to unravel the September 11 plot". The FBI had recruited an informant in San Diego who met repeatedly with Mr. Hazmi and Mr. Mihdhar. However, the FBI did not act on his information because the CIA had not told the FBI of the pair's suspected links to al-Qaeda. The FBI agent handling the informant said "we would have done everything" had the CIA revealed what it knew.

[From the Financial Times, July 25, 2003]

DECEPTION AND DENIAL (PART TWO)—THE WHITE HOUSE'S INTELLIGENCE PROBLEMS GET BIGGER

It is often the case with lengthy inquiries into government failures that what gets left out of the final report is more interesting than what goes in it. Politicians are not unduly burdened by a capacity for self-criticism and if they can hide behind spurious claims of national security to avoid providing potentially damning evidence to hungry investigators, you can generally guarantee that they will.

The publication yesterday of the results of the congressional investigation into the performance of the US intelligence services in the run-up to the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks is a case in point.

We knew already that the White House had been most unhelpful in its dealings with the congressional investigators, failing to make available critical material such as presidential briefings on the scale of the al-Qaeda threat. Now, in the form of dozens of blank pages in the 900-page volume, the scale of official obstruction becomes clear.

Though the report still reaches some valid conclusions about the failures of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency in acting on what they knew about the hijackers, the overall effect of the administration's behaviour is to produce more questions. Most disturbing is the White House's unwillingness to disclose important new information on Saudi Arabia's role in the terrorist plot.

The long list of errors by the FBI and the CIA remains the central finding. The fact that officials had opportunities to track the movements of at least two of the hijackers in the months before the attacks represents the largest single failing and highlights flaws in intelligence co-ordination that still need to be put right. In addition the lack of reliable intelligence overseas prevented either the Clinton or the Bush administration from taking preemptive action against al-Qaeda that might have scuppered the plot.

But the tantalising glimpses of the Saudi role that survived the censor's pencil are by far the report's most potentially explosive aspects. Meetings between some of the hijackers and Omar al-Bayoumi, a Saudi citizen, are well documented, as are indications that he supplied them with cash. But instead of detailed investigation of Mr. al-Bayoumi and his alleged links to the Saudi government, there are only blank spaces. The administration says it could not agree to publication of this and other material for national security reasons. That may be true. But it is hard to avoid suspicion that some of the coyness may have political origins. The Bush administration is already under fire for its dubious disclosures about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Now the White House has added a new layer of haze over its credibility.

In the end the congressional report is not so much an indictment of the intelligence agencies, though it clearly highlights their faults. It is an indictment of the needless obfuscation surrounding too much of this administration's national security policy.

[From the Financial Times, July 25, 2002]

SEPTEMBER 11 INVESTIGATION UNDERMINES BUSH'S CLAIMS

(By Edward Alden and Marianne Brun-Rovet)

For the past 18 months the administration of President George W. Bush has clung firmly to the argument that, while there were certainly intelligence failings, the September 11, 2001 attacks could not have been prevented.

The release yesterday of the declassified final report of the congressional investigation will make that argument much harder to sustain, and could ignite fresh controversy for an administration already under scrutiny for manipulating intelligence information before the war on Iraq.

The report contains few entirely new revelations about the missed opportunities to unravel the plot of the 19 hijackers. But the detailed evidence of how much the U.S. knew of their movements before the attacks belies the assertion made to the investigators last year by Robert Mueller, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's director, that "as far as we know, they contacted no known terrorist sympathizers in the U.S."

The report points out that five of the hijackers had met a total of 14 people who had come to the FBI's attention as part of counter-terrorism investigations.

Four of those 14 were under active FBI investigation when the hijackers were in the U.S.

The hijackers who led the attacks were not isolated but instead were backed by what U.S. intelligence knew to be "a radical Islamic network in the U.S. that could support al-Qaeda and other terrorist operatives."

As early as June 2001 the CIA had learned that senior al-Qaeda planner Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was recruiting people for operations in the U.S.

The report also revealed that an informant for the FBI had numerous meetings with two of the hijackers, Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar, when they were living in San Diego. But the San Diego FBI was unaware that the Central Intelligence Agency had in 2000 identified the two men as al-Qaeda operatives, so never acted on the information.

The FBI had also opened in 1998 a counter-terrorism investigation of Omar al-Bayoumi, a Saudi who co-signed the lease on an apartment in San Diego rented by the two hijackers, paid the first month's rent and organised a party to welcome them into the community.

Mr. Bayoumi became the subject of attention late last year after it was revealed that

the wife of Prince Bandar, the Saudi ambassador to the U.S., had indirectly deposited tens of thousands of dollars into an account held by Mr. Bayoumi's wife. The Saudis have said they had no knowledge that the money, which was part of a charitable contribution, had ended up in her accounts.

The report says that although Mr. Bayoumi was a student, he "had access to seemingly unlimited funding from Saudi Arabia", and at one time made a \$400,000 donation to a Kurdish mosque in San Diego. It adds: "One of the FBI's best sources in San Diego informed the FBI that he thought that Mr. Bayoumi must be an intelligence officer for Saudi Arabia or another foreign power."

The Saudi government denies the charge, saying he has no connection to the Saudi government.

The most controversial element of the report will be what it does not contain. At the insistence of the Bush administration, 28 pages discussing evidence of foreign government support for the hijackers was deleted from the declassified version.

"The Bush administration has done everything they can do to make sure that's not the focus," said William Wechsler, a former White House official who co-authored a recent report critical of the Saudi failure to cut off financing for terrorist groups.

"They want to talk about tactical breakdown but they don't want to talk about the elephant in the room."

U.S. officials note that Saudi co-operation in counter-terrorism investigations has improved markedly, particularly following al-Qaeda attack's in Riyadh in May that left more than 30 people dead. The Saudis responded angrily yesterday that "we cannot respond to blank pages".

But the investigation showed that even well after the September 11 attacks, Saudi Arabia continued to impede U.S. efforts in areas such as shutting down financing for terrorism.

While the congressional investigation was a bipartisan undertaking, its conclusions will fuel a partisan battle over whether the Bush administration has responded fully to the lessons of September 11.

Democrats have homed in on intelligence failures, both in the war on terrorism and before the war on Iraq, as the vulnerable spot for an administration that has been widely trusted by Americans on national security since the attacks.

The report challenges whether the administration has yet made sufficient efforts to improve intelligence gathering and sharing in response to the serious breakdowns uncovered by the investigation.

On foreign support for terrorists, the report says "only recently", and in part due to the pressure from the congressional inquiry, had the agencies tried to determine the extent of the problem. "This gap in US intelligence coverage is unacceptable, given the magnitude and immediacy of the potential risk to US national security," it says.

Democratic hopefuls for the next presidential election, including Senator Bob Graham, the former intelligence committee chairman, are already seizing on the problems identified by the inquiry to criticise the administration's actions since September 11.

The controversy over what is missing in the report will only deepen those charges. Senator Joseph Lieberman, another Democratic candidate, said yesterday that the administration "has, even today, failed to demand a full accounting of intelligence failures, in order to ensure that they have been corrected".